

ACIDZINE

A MINA FANZINE



ACID: a Mina Ashido fanzine

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DIY Bunny Costume!! LOL♥

Practicals

Amuk

“Eek!” Mina squeaked as she fell on her butt, narrowly dodging an explosive burst. Fireballs flew over her head, smashing destructively through a house. As a wall collapsed, she stared at the scorched bricks and gulped. “That...was close.”

“Yeah.” Crouching next to her, Kirishima nodded fearfully. His sleeves were frayed, small holes burned from the stray sparks. They were going to have to take their uniform in for repairs after this. “Really—”

As he spoke, the house burst into flames. They stared at it for a long second, then at each other before quickly scrambling to their feet. Behind them was a car and Mina didn’t want to know what would happen if the flames reached it. When the flames reached it. Already the houses next to the first one were catching fire. Scanning their surroundings, she spotted a small alleyway. “There!”

“Where?” Kirishima peered over his shoulder before shoving her head down. “Watch out!”

Another fireball flew overhead. BOOM! Mina could hardly call the building in front of her a house anymore. Grabbing Kirishima’s hand, she sprinted to the alley. “Hurry!”

Laughter echoed through the streets behind her and she wasn’t sure if that was Bakugou’s or the principal’s. A shiver ran up her spine either way. When Mina had first heard that this semester’s practicals opponents were teacher/student mix-ups, she had been excited. It would be way easier than last time. They didn’t even need to beat up any teachers this time, they just had to save a bunch of hostages.

Clearly, UA didn’t want her to pass any of her exams. Who thought it was a good idea to make Bakugou a villain? Any restraint he had was completely lost now and she didn’t need a bird’s eye view of their exam grounds to see the destruction from his wake. Mina had heard explosions before she’d even encountered Bakugou.

Why couldn't they get someone easy, like Minata?

Ahead of her, there was a fork in the road. She didn't even think as she took the left turn; the explosions herded her as she tried to get them as far away as possible. Mina felt like a rat in the maze as she raced through the winding streets, hoping she wouldn't find a dead end at the next corner. Luckily, Bakugou was the only one chasing them down—the principal had opted to stay with the hostages, guarding them.

That thought didn't reassure her as much as it should have.

Only when she couldn't hear the explosions did she stop moving, dropping Kirishima's hand as she leaned against a wall. Sliding down to her knees, she panted, "Do you think he might be...just a little too into this?"

"Just a little." Kirishima winced as a plume of smoke rose several blocks away. He rubbed the back of his neck. "He's really not holding back."

"Neither is the principal. Did you hear his threats to the hostages?" She rested her head on her knees with a groan. It was impossible. It was entirely impossible. She didn't have Deku's brains or Todoroki's instincts or even Momo's strategies. Tangling her hands in her hair, Mina grumbled, "We're going to fail."

"No, we—" Another loud blast drowned out Kirishima's words. The black plume was a little closer now and they didn't have long before they were caught.

"Is he part bloodhound?" Mina grumbled, glaring up at the pillar of smoke.

"Pitbull," Kirishima corrected, shielding his eyes from the sun as he squinted. "...okay, we might fail."

"Right?" Mina stared up at him pitifully. They'd have another camp and she'd get stuck in remedial lessons again and— "No summer vacation!!"

"Maybe..." Kirishima scratched his cheek, considering it all. He tilted his head, ran a hand through his hair, and bit his lip. Sitting down next to her, he yanked at his short hair, making it even spikier than normal. "I...I can't think of anything."

“He listens to you, can’t you...” she trailed off meaningfully.

“That’s cheating!” Kirishima’s jaw dropped, horrified.

“It’s not!” she argued back, puffing her cheeks. She glared at him balefully. “We’re just using our resources like any hero would.”

“...right.” He furrowed his brow, doubt laced in his words. After a few seconds, he shook his head. “He wouldn’t do it.”

Well, that was what she had expected, but she had to give it a shot. What else was there to do? It was like playing a game on insane mode. Maybe together they could barely take down either the principal or Bakugou, but both? And save the hostages?

“It’s impossible!” Mina moaned, crossing her arms and burying her face. No matter how much she racked her brains, all she could think of was charging and splitting up. Simple tactics that her opponents would easily see through. “Do you think they could double fail us?”

Kirishima stared her in a panic, the possibility dawning on him. “Aizawa-sensei... he could do that.”

“He is that sadistic, isn’t he?” Mina’s shoulder’s drooped as she considered it. “Like, he could take us all to the beach and then lock us up next to the window.”

“Or take us to the mountains and keep us indoors the entire time.” Kirishima’s hands clenched, his fist hitting the pavement. “Last time we could practice with everyone, but what if...”

“He doesn’t let us go at all?” Mina’s eyes widened—she couldn’t even sneak out to any barbecues or play with sprinklers or anything. Just her, Kirishima, and the others, trapped in the school, unable to do anything but watch as their summer slipped away.

BOOM! Mina jumped, remembering where they were. What they were fighting. This one sounded barely a block away. They had maybe minutes before Bakugou caught up. If they ran—no, there was no point in running again. Even if they had

the time, neither she nor Kirishima would come up with a plan.

It just wasn't them. It would never be them. She was doomed to never have a summer again, at this rate. Disappointed, she studied the closest plume of smoke, wondering how long it'll take for Bakugou to pop out of the nearest corner. "I guess that's it."

Kirishima clenched his fist, banging the wall behind him in frustration. The brick crumbled, losing to his hardened form. Taking a deep breath as he steeled himself, he shot her a half-hearted smile. "At least we'll fail together."

Fail together. Mina blinked, staring at him, before laughing. Together. She hadn't thought of it that way. Together. She felt a little lighter. Well, if she had to fail with someone, she was glad it was Kirishima. Around him, she didn't feel like a complete idiot.

Riding on this high, she slapped her cheeks. If they were going to go out like idiots, might as well go the full way. Standing up, she dusted her knees. "Plan A it is."

"Plan A?" Kirishima scrambled to his feet, standing next to her. He rubbed his ear, as though he wasn't sure if he heard right.

"Yeah." She beamed brightly at him. It was simple, really. They should have just done this from the start. Neither of them were strategists and they shouldn't have bothered with it. All it did was waste time and energy. "We split up to distract Bakugou and save the hostages."

Surprised, Kirishima's jaw dropped. "Didn't we agree it wouldn't work?"

Mina snickered. Now that she'd decided, the tension just left her. "We don't have a better plan."

He nodded, giving that to her. "Yeah, but shouldn't we just work together then?"

"Nah." Mina crossed her arms, shaking her head vigorously. "Then we'd definitely fail the test—it'd just be students fighting students, like our first test."

Realization slowly dawned on Kirishima. “And if we split up, we can at least try to do the test and save the hostages.”

“Right. That’s got to give us some marks at least.” Hands on her hips, she smirked confidentially. Seriously, they should have just gone with this from the get go. “This is what we’re good at. Dealing with things head on. Not thinking things through. This plan suits us perfectly.”

“That’s not really a compliment, you know,” he commented flatly before breaking into laughter. Kirishima smashed a fist into his open palm. He looked as relaxed as she felt. “You’re right. A man is supposed to face things head on, after all.”

“Right?” She puffed her chest, proud. Jabbing a thumb at herself, Mina grinned. “I’m quicker, so I’ll distract Bakugou.”

“Huh?” Kirishima frowned, scrunching his face as he considered it. “Shouldn’t you save the hostages then? You can slip past the principal.”

“Yeah but you and Bakugou will get caught up in a dual or something.” Mina rolled her eyes. She could already picture the wake of destruction from that. “And after he steamrolls you, I’ll get tag-teamed.”

“I wouldn’t get steamrolled!” Kirishima protested, indignant.

“Fine, fine.” She threw her hands up; it was easier to just agree than to argue about this. “Let’s rock, paper, scissors over it, okay?”

“...alright. That’s fair.” Kirishima agreed reluctantly. Raising his right fist, he started to shake it. “Rock, paper—”

She didn’t wait for him to finish before turning on her heel, already sprinting toward Bakugou. Ignoring Kirishima’s surprised squawk, she hollered, “CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!”

Mentally, she sent an apology to Kirishima. The principal was far scarier than Bakugou, there was no way she was dealing with him.

Trufflesth





エイリアンクイーン
Alien Queen
UFO CATCHER



A Bright Future

Ohmytheon

Mina hadn't always wanted to be a hero.

While most future heroes daydreamed about costumes and using their quirks to save the day or playing superheroes and villains in the park with their friends, Mina's dreams were filled with an assortment of other colorful ideas. The world was so big and exciting. She could never settle on just one thing. Where was the fun in that?

First, she wanted to be a ballerina. As if born graceful, she loved to prance around her home to any music her parents played on the radio. It didn't matter what the song was; she would find a way to dance to it. When other kids shied away from dancing out of embarrassment, Mina was never afraid to jump into the spotlight and let loose. Nothing was going to stop her from doing something she enjoyed and was talented at.

Next, she wanted to do makeup for celebrities. Despite bursting with energy, she forced herself to sit down and watch her mother paint her face. It was like art to Mina. Sometimes, she got to be the canvas, her mother's makeup brushes tickling her nose and cheeks and making her laugh. With her bright pink skin, it was difficult to find makeup that worked for her, but she became skilled in finding the best and boldest colors to work with. Even when other people hesitated over her color choice, she stuck to her guns. She knew what she looked good in.

One of her biggest dreams was to become a famous wrestler. Many of the boys that lived around her liked to pretend they had their own wrestling league. They wouldn't let her join at first, but she wormed her way in when she was eight by making a bet. If she beat their toughest member, they'd let her play with them.

Wearing a purple tutu, bright eyeshadow, and black combat boots, she must have been a strange sight to see. She certainly hadn't looked threatening, even if some

kids did tease her about her eyes and horns. Her parents gave her the freedom to dress how she wanted (maybe a little too much freedom), but it made it easy to spot her even at night. The boys had laughed when she stepped up to wrestle a kid with at least a foot on her.

They hadn't laughed for long, not after she thoroughly trounced the boy and sat on top of his back, brightly beaming in pride. "Who's next?" she asked, excited to prove her worth. It wasn't right of them to exclude kids from joining simply because they were a girl or goofy-looking or small. After that, it wasn't uncommon to find her wrestling with the older kids in her neighborhood, almost always coming on top. With Mina's inclusion, the little neighborhood wrestling group grew until the adults put a stop to it when she was ten.

It bummed her out. She had loved the rush it gave her, so unlike when she danced or did her makeup, and didn't understand why her parents were uncomfortable with her wrestling. It wasn't like she was getting into fights like some kids at school. Everyone in their group was friends.

"You're our little girl, Mina," her father told her over dinner when she asked. "We don't want you tearing up your clothes or accidentally getting hurt."

Mina frowned. "But I never get hurt." Her father gave her a look of disbelief. "Okay, I don't get super hurt." She perked up, wiping away the frown and replacing it with a big smile. "And I almost always win!"

"Yes, but if you get hurt fighting-"

"Wrestling."

"If you get hurt wrestling, then you won't be able to dance," her father finished. "And you don't want that to happen. You're very passionate about dancing and talented too. You could make a future out of it."

Mina considered her father's words that night and the next and the next after that. She couldn't shake them, no matter what she did. Being a dancer had been one of her dreams for as long as she could remember, but it wasn't her only dream. Even then, she had never thought about dancing as a career or a future. She just liked

doing it. But a job? She would never quit dancing, but that didn't feel right.

What did she want her future to be? What did she truly want to be? She was still a kid. Surely she had time to have fun and not worry about such things. When she got closer to high school, she would think it over. The future felt so far away; she couldn't think so far ahead now, not when so much could happen.

Months later, after turning eleven, Mina found herself waiting at school to be picked up after dance practice. Her mother was running late, but Mina didn't worry. She sat outside on the steps, tapping her foot to the beat of the music playing in her ears. Despite just practicing a routine for nearly two hours, she still had the feel of that rhythm in her body. It never quite went away. Her music was turned up loud, so she couldn't hear anything else, but her sharp eyes did spot something upsetting.

She didn't go to a bad school, but every school had mean kids. Mina didn't know why anyone felt the desire to be mean to someone else. It didn't make sense to her when it was so easy to be kind, so much so that it upset her when she witnessed someone being bullied.

In this case, two bigger and obviously older boys had cornered the one boy in her dance group. He was smaller than even Mina, cowering against a wall in the boys' shadows. She didn't need to hear to know they were mocking him. That wasn't nice at all. He was a good dancer. Maybe he wasn't strong enough yet to do any lifts like their teacher expected of him, but he was fluid and a quick learner. On the floor, he was confident. Out here, it was a much different story.

Mina found herself standing up and storming in their direction before even thinking. She pulled her earbuds out and jammed them into her jacket pocket. "Hey! What do you think you're doing?"

Both bullies turned around to stare at her. The taller one sneered. "We're just talking to our friend." He clapped the small boy on the shoulders, nearly knocking him to his knees. "Aren't we?"

"Y-yeah," the boy stammered.

"Not that it's any of your business, pinky," Bully Two declared. "We're having fun."

Undeterred, Mina put a hand on her hip and glared. “It doesn’t look like he’s having fun to me.” She extended her other hand in between the two bullies to the boy. “C’mon, you can sit with me while we wait for our parents.”

“Hey,” Bully Two said, stepping in her way and pushing her hand aside. “What gives? Didn’t he just say he’s fine? Go away and play with your dolls. We’re not doing anything.”

“You’re being big meanie butts,” Mina told them firmly. “I’m not just gonna sit back and let you hurt him.”

“We ain’t hurting him,” Bully One insisted.

The boy forced a weak smile. “It’s okay, Ashido.”

“You don’t have to lie to me,” Mina said. “I’m not afraid of them.”

Bully Two snorted. “Who do you think you are? His hero? You’re barely taller than him. I could lift you up and throw you in the pond.” Bully One laughed, even though it wasn’t funny. Mina certainly wasn’t laughing and neither was the dancer boy, whose downcast gaze pulled at her heart. He was used to these kids being mean to him. It wasn’t right. “Now get out of here and go wait for your mommy before you get hurt.”

Mina sighed. “I didn’t wanna do this.”

“Do what?” Bully One asked, a smirk on his face. How could someone this young already be so mean? She didn’t get it. “What can you really do?”

“If you won’t stop being mean to him for no reason,” Mina said, wagging a warning finger at them, “then I’m gonna make you stop.”

“Aw,” Bully Two cooed mockingly. “She really thinks she’s a big hero.” He punched a fist against the palm of his other hand and turned to his friend. “Why don’t we show her what happens to kids that stick their noses into other people’s business?”

Ten minutes later, the bullies were all but scrambling away, their egos and bodies bruised. Stacked up against someone that knew how to fight, they hadn’t stood a

chance. Mina watched them go, hands on her hips and fire in her belly. Determination burned inside of her. It was a different feeling from the pride she got from wrestling her friends or the excitement when she danced in front of a crowd.

“You didn’t have to do that,” the boy murmured.

“Yeah, I did,” Mina told him. Who else would’ve stepped in? A few adults had walked by, but none of them had said anything. It had been up to her to stop him from getting hurt. She didn’t mind stepping up to the plate. She never had. “I couldn’t just stand there and watch you get hurt. That’s not nice.”

“That sounds like what a hero would say,” he pointed out.

A smile pulled at Mina’s lips. “Maybe I am one.”

It wouldn’t hurt to add that to her list of dreams. As a hero, she could use her strength in wrestling and agility in dancing. She’d be able to wear a bright costume for everyone to see. Plus, she would be able to protect people and make them smile. Actually, becoming a hero sounded right up her alley. Maybe that was what she would be when she grew up.



品店

ラーメン





Baked Love

Calucadu

It was a coincidence that Mina heard that phone call that day. But then again, Uraraka hadn't exactly been hiding, probably too distracted by the incoming call to go to her room. She'd just walked over to the stairs and answered it. That's why when the pink haired girl came down, she'd heard it all.

Mina was profoundly moved when she noticed just how upset Uraraka had seemed. She didn't know what the conversation was about, or who'd called, but the pink haired girl decided she had to do something for her friend.

The first idea that popped into her head made her smile instantly and she hurried over to talk to Satou, to ask him for recipes. He seemed willing to help and led her to the kitchen, giving easy instructions and tips while they picked the ingredients they were going to use. Since the simple kitchen they shared at the dorms was unsurprisingly understocked, he kindly gave her some of his precious supplies. Mina promised she'd pay him back eventually.

He turned the oven on while she mixed the sugar and butter together under his careful supervision. When it was done to his satisfaction, she proceeded to beat in the eggs a little at a time. He helped by adding the flour and she did the milk, asking if the consistency seemed right. When that was ready, she got out the little pink paper sheets he'd given her and placed them neatly on the tray. He instructed her to fill them with the mix until they were half full.

Satou made sure the oven was warm enough before he asked Mina to put the tray inside. He turned the timer on but insisted they check on them regularly.

She nodded eagerly, happily picking up another bowl, this time for the icing. He started beating butter in it, humming to himself as he did. He asked Mina to pour in the icing sugar and he beat that in too. He let her give it a go when she asked, and he proceeded to add the last bit of the sugar in with some milk. The resulting

mixture looked smooth, which made him feel happy. He also complimented her, handing her the pink food colouring she'd asked to borrow from him. She mixed it in, watching the icing turn a nice vibrant pink that was sure to make Uraraka cheer up in no time!

Satou spooned the icing into a piping bag and showed her how to cover the cupcakes in icing. Mina was extra careful as she did as he instructed, moving her hands in a spiralling motion as she squeezed the bag gently. When she felt confident enough that she could do a good job and the pastries were out of the oven, she began to adorn them with the pink icing, squealing as she finished each one.

When the cupcakes were finished, he congratulated her by patting her on the back and she thanked him repeatedly for his help and encouragement.

She picked up a plate and filled it with the better-looking delicacies before walking into the common room looking for Uraraka. More than one hand tried to grab one of her desserts, but Mina jokingly threatened to spray acid on them if they misbehaved. She would've loved to share her cupcakes, but her priority was helping her friend!

It didn't take long for Mina to come to the conclusion that Uraraka was in her room. Upon knocking, she clearly heard a slightly hoarse voice answer, telling her to come in.

Uraraka looked like she'd been crying but tried to pretend like she hadn't. There weren't any tear marks across her cheeks, but her eyes were red and a little swollen, and her face lacked her usual blush.

"I made you pink cupcakes!" screamed Mina, showing her the sweet creations with a pleased smile. She was going for over the top on purpose, hoping her enthusiasm would spread to the other. It seemed like it did a little, when she saw the smallest of smiles appear on her friend's face.

"Ah, that's so nice!" The blush slowly returned to Uraraka's face, which only made Mina happier.

"But now we've got to talk. You've got to tell me who called you and why you feel so bad about it."

“It... it’s... it’s not what it seems.” Uraraka said, waving her inside and sitting on the bed. She took a cupcake when Mina forced the plate onto her to encourage her to spill the beans. With her mouth full, she started to speak. It had been her parents, and it had been an awfully normal conversation. Nothing they said had made her feel bad, and nothing had happened at her house to make her upset.

“Sho?” Mina asked with her mouth full, a bit of pink icing on her lips. “Whuh haffened? Why’f you sho shad?”

Uraraka sighed, closing her eyes tightly before opening them again, staring at her friend with a confidence she seldom seemed to have. She grasped Mina’s hand tightly, almost painfully and whispered that she may as well tell her. “My parents aren’t doing anything wrong. I am.”

And with those words, Mina gulped audibly, accidentally choking on her cupcake. The pink haired girl coughed, trying to get rid of the sensation of uneasiness that came with what she’d just heard.

“What did you do!?” Then she realised that that would only make it worse, so she tried a different approach. “I bet it wasn’t that bad. You can never do anything really, really wrong. You’re so sweet and nice! And you always have the best intentions.”

Uraraka sighed. “It’s not that. I’m not doing enough. It’ll never be enough. My parents are struggling financially and there’s nothing I can do about it! And... And I’ll never be the hero they need. I’ll never be the best one, I’ll... I’ll...!”

Mina quickly placed the plate on the bed and embraced her in a tight hug. She wasn’t all that good with words, but she hoped that what she couldn’t tell her by talking, she could say by squeezing her with affection. It seemed to work as she felt her friend relax against her.

“You’re wonderful. You’re the best. You’re all they want. Ever. Don’t ever think you’re not. You’ll always be the hero they need, Ochako.”

Uraraka didn’t answer. She just buried her face into pink locks and inhaled.

“They’re proud of you. They always will be.”

“Thank you so much, Mina. That’s all I needed to hear.”

“And it’s all true.”

“Thank you. And thanks for the cupcakes! They’re delicious!”

“My pleasure! But hey! Since we’re not going to eat all of these,” Mina said, gesturing at the cupcakes wildly, an ecstatic grin on her face, “we could offer them to whoever’s in the common room? I have some more in the kitchen. You up for that?”

“Yeah, sure!” Without letting Uraraka so much as breathe, the pink haired girl grabbed her arm and took off, the plate with the pastries in her other hand.

Once in the common room, Mina gently pushed her friend to offer their classmates the leftover cupcakes in exchange for a hug. She blushed as she complied, opening her arms to her friends.

With a grin on her face, Mina supervised her, watching intently. She frowned when her eyes locked onto Kirishima, noticing that something was off. He was munching on his cupcake, but his gaze was on the floor and he looked downcast.

She crossed her arms over her chest, pensive. She was determined to do everything she could just to make any of her friends smile; she would not tolerate any of them being sad, ever. Thinking about what she could do, she smirked, deciding that she could make both Kirishima and the entirety of class 1-A happy at the same time by preparing a surprise party for him.

After all the cupcakes had been finished, she rounded up a few of her trustworthy classmates and together they came up with a plan. They assigned themselves tasks with a reasonable date for completion. Kaminari and Sero were in charge of the food and drinks; Mina, Uraraka and Yaoyorozu had to decorate the common room, gussy up the place to make it worthy of a party; and Midoriya’s task was to make sure Kirishima wouldn’t be in the dorms. He did so by preparing a sparring date, just the two of them.

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Kirishima was close to crying when he opened the door and found all of his friends and classmates waiting for him with a scream of ‘surprise!’. His mouth fell open as he looked around, sparing quick glances at their smiling faces, the emotions overwhelming him.

The party went amazingly well. Jirou acted as the DJ, playing an ample repertoire of music to suit everyone’s tastes, all tracks that Kaminari tried to dance to with his awful sense of rhythm. Even Bakugou was on his best behaviour. He wasn’t dancing but at least he wasn’t exploding anything.

“How’s the party boy?” Mina walked over to Kirishima and smiled at him lovingly. “It’s great! It’s amazing! Thank you so much!” By the look on his face, she thought he was about to burst into tears again. With a slight hint of panic in her face she turned to look for someone. She gestured frantically at the first person she saw, who happened to be Shouji.

“Don’t cry! You deserve this!”

“I don’t know what I did to deserve all of you, you’re just all so great.”

By the time Kiri had said those words the other boy had appeared, looking confused.

“Hey! Take a picture of us!” Mina shoved her phone into Shouji’s grip and slung her arm over Eijirou’s shoulder, bringing them closer. She made a V with her free hand and grinned at the camera. She heard the snap of the photo being taken but hung onto him for a few seconds before going over to look at it, showing him as well. “We look super cute!”

“Yeah, we do! Thanks, Mina!”

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For Mina’s birthday, Kirishima gave her the picture Shouji took of them together, neatly framed in pink as a present. With tears in her eyes, she hung it in her dorm room, and it was her favourite gift she got that year.







A Hero's Look

lesboinspace

“Hey, uh, pretty...pinky.” With that mumbled statement, Jirou lifts her gaze to meet Mina’s and proceeds to finger gun. It’s the oddest, most disconcerting scene she’s ever witnessed, and, being a student at UA, Mina has seen some very disturbing things.

Alarm bells begins to blare in Mina’s mind at the strange scenario, as if anticipating an attack. She maintains eye contact with Jirou while Mina leans forward to slide her phone onto the bed sheets.

Not another word is uttered by either of them for several painful seconds. Mina continues to scrutinize Jirou, briefly considering the possibility that the girl before her might be a very dysfunctional clone.

Jirou’s gaze flit across the room and back to her classmate, hoping for any sort of verbal reward. However, her not so laid back posture suddenly straightens as she relieves the doorframe of her hunched back.

“Shit, is that offensive? I’m sorry. I’ll just leave now.” Jirou holds her hands out in front of her, as if attempting to dissuade Mina from striking. Mina merely blinks at the bizarre behavior before shaking her head to steady the very anxious girl backing into the hallway.

“Oh, um, no...you’re fine.” Of course she is. Doesn’t Jirou remember that Pinky is literally Mina’s hero name? “What’s up? You’re acting funny.”

This statement seems to instill great distress in the already panicking Jirou. Her arms coil around her chest as she glances at everything but Mina.

“No I’m not.”

No way is Mina going to let this go. Not with that poor defense. She shoots off

the bed frame, directing an accusatory finger at the startled Jirou.

“Liar! You’re never this...this stiff.” A sympathetic smile eases its way across Mina’s lips when Jirou sputters, failing to offer a rebuttal. Patting a spot on her mattress, Mina motions for Jirou join her. “C’mon in, you obviously want to talk to me about something.”

There’s an evident fear lingering in the musician’s wide, calculating eyes, as if determining whether she should enter or abandon her quest. The teens spend another agonizing eternity of disconcerting quiet while Jirou contemplates her options. Her feet fidget in place, like they’re preparing to flee if necessary.

Mina nibbles at her bottom lip, fingers running across the soft bedspread as she watches Jirou on the verge of malfunctioning. She drops her eyes for just a moment until a exasperated sigh shatters the silence.

It nearly gives Mina a heart attack, her hand clasping the hem of her shirt as her gaze returns to the source. Twirling her earphone jacks between her fingers, Jirou eyes the wall while she steps into the dorm room.

“Right, thanks. Sorry for being weird, I’m just nervous.” Mina’s furrowed brows elicit a low laugh from Jirou. “Freaky, right? I guess I’m not used to presenting these feelings to others like this.” Jirou’s twitching fingers rub at her neck and then her wrist, unable to pick a location. They eventually settle on twirling her earphone jacks once more.

“Anyway, I was wondering if you could do me a favor, but you have to promise you won’t laugh,” Jirou’s occupied hands fall in defeat, her voice reduced to a whisper, “or think less of me for what I’m about to ask.”

Mina leers so far back that she almost topples onto the floor. Did she hear that right? “What?! That’s ridiculous! Jeez, you really are acting strange.” Her tone is light and playful, an amused smile adding to her casual demeanor. Mina didn’t expect Jirou to promptly stand up. “Don’t go, I’m sorry! You just surprised me is all. You’re usually so...”

At the shameful expression flashing across Jirou’s face, Mina dams her mouth to keep the unintentionally hurtful words from flowing. Jirou ends the brief silence,

hands shoved into her pockets. “I’m not as confident as you think I am.” Determined to evict the heartbreaking look from her friend, Mina takes Jirou’s hands into her own, her stare unwavering.

“I would never laugh at you, and there’s absolutely nothing you could do that’d make me think that you’re any less cool and strong. Please tell me, I’m here for you.” Those golden eyes shine even brighter with compassion revving through them, relieving the tension in Jirou’s frame. With a reaffirmed smirk, she plops back down onto the comforter.

“Okay, so I’m going on my first date with someone later and—” Mina lets out a high squeal and bounces in place. Jirou narrows her eyes at her eager peer, annoyed by the interruption and bobbing mattress. “Actually, it’s my first date ever. I was wondering if you’d work your girly magic on me, you know? To help me look my best and all that.”

Another gleeful shriek erupts out of Mina as she squirms in excitement. “Oh my gosh, a date?! I’d love to help,” her lips curl further upwards from joyous to cocky, eyeing Jirou like she’s been granted all the quirks in existence, “but you have to tell me who you’re going out with if you want my amazing styling services.”

Once again, Jirou rises from the bed, her back to Mina as she heads for the hallway. “Never mind then, I’ll find someone else to—”

“Wait, wait! Fine, you don’t have to spill. Can I at least guess who you’re going to spend this romantic evening with?” Mina hadn’t even realized her desperation had launched her towards Jirou, who’s frowning down at the wrist gripping her sleeve.

Jirou pulls Mina’s wrapped fingers off the fabric and returns to her initial position on the mattress. “Cool it, I just said tonight’s our first date...and no.”

Mina’s obvious sulking has no effect on Jirou’s stern expression. She continues to pout despite its lack of influence on the musician. “You’re no fun. Is it someone from our school at least?”

“Duh...wait, I mean no! Ugh, freaking dammit.” Smacking her forehead, Jirou glares at the victorious smirk on Mina’s face. Mina snorts and bumps her side

against Jirou's hunched figure. Jirou shifts her hand from her skin to her hair, tugging at the roots.

"Ha, I snuck a detail outta you! So is your mystery lover in our class or...?"

"Wha—I'm not saying anything else about who it is, okay? No one else knows about this, and I'm only telling you because...I'm really, really scared. And super desperate." Jirou narrows her eyes at Mina, trying to stress the absolute severity behind her words. Finally, Mina sighs and hangs her head, surrendering.

"Fine, have it your way. Just know that being left in the dark is beyond painful!" Her chin points from the floor to the ceiling, arms following as if reaching for any deities above, questioning why she's being tortured like this. Rolling her eyes, Jirou waits for Mina to cease the semantics.

Soon enough, Mina lowers her hands to Jirou's shoulders, grinning and glittering like an elated sun. "I'll gladly help you out though. Anything for a citizen in need! Isn't that what being a hero is all about?"

"I mean, I guess so...I appreciate your aid, then."

Resigning herself to Mina, Jirou can only watch in awe as Mina jumps off the comforter, pacing for a bit before throwing drawers open. Clothes are scrutinized before being tossed to the floor in dismay, as if they don't deserve to be put back after disappointing her.

A whirlwind of fabrics fly through the air. Mina holds a few up next to Jirou, considering them before they too are disregarded. Jirou can barely catch a glimpse at each one before they're dismissed.

After ages of and Jirou picking at each of her fingernails, Mina finally decides on the perfect attire. She lays them out by the bed, a manic grin on her face as she claps, delighted at her accomplishment. Jirou moves to eye the outfit that took Mina so long to construct. She doesn't get a chance to.

Mina's zealous humming contort into chirps, glee uncontainable as she yanks Jirou off the mattress. The taken off guard girl emits a harsh gasp as she's flung into Mina's desk chair. Its wheels whine as they're forced across the floor with a violent

shove, landing Jirou in front of a mirror.

An armory of makeup is situated on the dresser. Jirou shrinks back at the sight, grimacing at her reflection, wary of what's to come. Relief mixes with the dread, thankful that Mina asks Jirou to keep her eyes closed for most of the application process. Her eyelids remain curtained whenever Jirou can have them lowered.

Once Jirou's makeup is done, Mina urges her to get dressed. The few strides across the room are agony for the musician. Something doesn't seem right. She looks great, yet Jirou feels awful and wrong. Picking up the clothes, her stomach sinks further.

Regardless, Jirou slips them on, albeit slowly and with grit teeth, like the outfit will sting her. Back turned, Mina eagerly waits for Jirou to get ready, bringing Mina's mental image into reality.

"I almost don't want to turn away! Not to creep on you or anything, I just feel like I'm missing out on a magical girl about to transform!"

Transform...This is what Jirou wanted, right? She asked for this. Nevertheless, her face is heavy with shimmering powders and drying liquids. The tube top hugs her chest too tightly, and Jirou has to fight the urge to tug at the mini skirt hovering just about her thighs. Jirou doesn't want to think about how long it'll take before she trips in these high heels.

Mina's wide smile and bouncing toes as she looks at her work go unnoticed. Jirou doesn't feel the gaze on her. She's too focused only her own as she stares at herself in the mirror, hesitant. Jirou may appear more appealing to the eye, but her guts ache more now than before she entered Mina's room.

The sparks in Mina's entranced eyes begin to dim once she notices just how uncomfortable Jirou is. Her flaring pride is snuffed, and she's suddenly ashamed. Mina dressed up Jirou in what she herself would've worn for such an occasion. She turned Jirou in her own image...Mina needs to fix this: She needs to make Jirou look more like Jirou.

She gets to work again, a new idea in mind. Jirou's clothes are replaced by a loose crop top, an ankle length skirt and combat boots; she wipes off most of the

makeup, leaving only a light amount of concealer and eyeliner. Throughout the second process, Jirou's expression goes from dubious to upbeat at the changes.

With Jirou ready, the teens part ways after a tight hug. Mina crawls back into bed with a warm smile on her face, content over being able to help without fists for once.



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